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FOREIGN MISSIONS IN THE LIGHT OF FACT.

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FOREIGN Missions are among the leading themes of the hour. They are discussed in the pulpit, in the newspaper press, in pamphlet and magazine, and are almost the talk of the streets. And criticism, sharper here, milder there, finds expression quite as freely as eulogy or defence. The remarkable events of the war in the East and their results on missionary operations in China and Japan; the thrilling and tragic events in Turkey, which succeed each other in quick succession, and deeply disturb all missionary plans and powerfully agitate the civilized world; these also have drawn a peculiar attention to foreign missions. It is a good time for dispassionate study and statement. If this movement is intrinsically weak and unworthy of support, the sooner it is known, the more clearly it is seen, the better for all. If it is both reasonable and worthy of generous support, it is well that the grounds of such an opinion be clearly stated and put before the minds of all.

The criticisms we hear may be reduced to four classes. They assert that the aim of foreign missions to Christianize all nations is absurd and incapable of execution; or that foreign missions are in the hands of unfit and incapable men, who can never carry them through to success; or that the methods employed are so unreasonable, so ill-adapted to the end, that they provoke opposition and hatred rather than confidence and love; or that, at any rate, they have accomplished nothing, and can never win any real success. These criticisms are fatal if they are valid, fatal not alone to foreign missions, but to the whole Christian scheme. Nothing is more deeply imbedded in the gospel than its universality; nothing is more central in Christ's work and claims than that he is the Redeemer and Lord of all the nations and generations of the earth, and that "of his kingdom there shall be no

end." If Christ was mistaken upon these fundamental points, so that the effort to carry out his purposes and build his kingdom in all the earth is absurd and fruitless, his authority as teacher, and his power as Redeemer, are at an end. A presumption, almost overwhelming, is thus raised against these objections at the very outset, and before they are considered in detail.

In the first place, we must obtain the right perspective, and clear away misapprehensions that have no real ground. The foreign missionary movement of the times is often spoken of as if it were something entirely new in Christian history, an experiment of this century alone. But this is a great mistake. Foreign missions are as old as Christianity, and have been in progress from the day of Pentecost to this hour. The Divine Author of this faith fixed upon it this character of universality, and announced that it was to go to all nations and prevail to the end of time. This is no fresh discovery of our age; it was known to Peter and John as fully as to Carey and Judson; and the sense of this worldwide and enduring career has never left the Christian society in any land or in any age. The gospel was at first confined to Palestine, and to a few souls gathered in Jerusalem. But it did not stay there; and it was not meant to stay there. It possessed itself first of the Roman world all around it. Then it met and won the rising nations of Mediæval Europe, and filled the continent with its light. Thence it passed to the New World, to found here one of its strongest fortresses. And to-day Christian America and Christian Europe join hands in the deliberate purpose to preach the gospel and build the church in every continent and nation and island of the earth. There is nothing in history more real or more majestic than this march of Christianity from the place of its origin across the nations and down the centuries to a world-wide dominion. And this whole process is the constant, varied, and effective foreign missionary activity of the Christian society. We know it in the divisions of Church History as "The Spread of Christianity"; but this is only another name for the history of foreign missions. The gospel has thus entered into the vast and imposing civilization of Rome, the heir of the ancient world, and into the nascent and rude society of the Northern tribes; has colonized the Western continent; and still reaches forth to the conquest of the world. By means of this agency the Roman world became Christian; Pagan Europe became

Christian; the wilds of America were peopled and possessed by men of Christian faith.

Here, then, is a long and glorious history, a solid array of unquestionable facts, always to be considered, when the meaning and effect of foreign missions are studied and judged. The expediency or the success of this movement is not to be judged merely by what has happened within the present generation or even within the present century, but by the recorded facts of eighteen hundred Christian centuries. The progress may appear to be slow in turning India and China to the Christian faith; but that is not the whole story. Foreign missions penetrated and filled and regenerated the Roman Empire, even though it required nearly three centuries to achieve the result; and no judgment of their success or fitness is valid that builds upon one of these facts and ignores the other. There was a time when it was as hard to find a Roman Christian as it ever has been to find a Chinese Christian; but that time quickly passed and passed forever, as it has already passed long since in China.

I am not now allowing that modern missions are a failure; I am simply calling attention to the fact that the judgment which pronounces them so is invalid and deals with only a part of the facts in question. Celsus, speaking for the Roman world of his day, alleged many of the things which the critics of to-day are repeating, and seemed to his times to have brought an unanswerable argument against the Christian Church. And Uhlhorn's remark is exactly in place: "Do the modern enemies of our faith know of no objections to bring forward except those which were advanced by our first antagonist seventeen hundred years ago? If so, then they are refuted before they write. For Celsus is refuted, I do not mean by Origen's answer, though that presses him very hard, but by the fact that the faith he scorned has triumphed." It is not claimed that foreign missions are faultlessly managed, or that every missionary is without defect, or that the methods have always been wise. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels," and human infirmity mars the record here and there. Even the work of the Apostles betrays the presence of human imperfection; the days of martyrdom are not without defect and excess; the missionary labors of Augustine and Boniface and Ansgar were by no means faultless. And yet the conversion of the Roman Empire was gloriously achieved;

the Northern nations were illuminated and Christianized, and all Europe won. It is one thing to show that imperfections of various kinds attach to a movement, and quite another to prove the movement itself a mistake. And we may fearlessly assert the wisdom and strength and certain triumph of foreign missions, while we acknowledge that they are not managed with perfect wisdom and are not administered by infallible men.

Perhaps the most satisfactory contribution to current discussion will be rendered by setting forth in positive form the aim of foreign missions, the agencies and methods employed in their prosecution, and the success they have already won. The criticisms of this age, as of the age of Celsus, rest so largely, not on facts and observations, but on misconceptions and unwarranted inferences, that nothing can relieve their force more surely than such a statement of facts as is now proposed.

In the first place, then, foreign missions are the effort of the church of our times to carry on and complete that spread of Christianity and Christian institutions which was enjoined by our Lord, and which has been an integral part of all Christian history. This effort is a primary and sacred duty of Christian discipleship in every age and in every land. The precept of our Lord, "Go, teach all nations," is clear and unrepealed; there can be no limit to the field. The mission of Jesus Christ is as certainly to the modern world as to the world of his day, as directly to Hindus as to Romans, to Chinese and Japanese as to Americans. It is no more presumptuous for the missionaries of our times to attempt the Christianization of the Oriental nations and the African tribes than it was for the Apostles and their successors to attempt the conversion of the old Roman world. For Christ is the Lord and Saviour of India and China and Japan, or he is not Lord and Saviour to any man. If we deny that he has any special gift for the people of the Orient, we must deny that he has any gift for man at all, and ignore the supreme facts of the eighteen Christian centuries that lie behind us.

The missionaries of our day, as in all past Christian centuries, assume this universal scope of the faith they teach, and unhesitatingly offer its celestial grace as the supreme gift to every human soul. They value education and social refinements, literature and all the gifts of civilization, and feel profoundly the need of these in every land. But they also understand that the Christ-

ian faith is the forerunner and cherishing atmosphere of all these blessings; that without that faith these other gifts will be fruitless; and so they touch the deeper need, in order that life may blossom with all these other gifts. Education, literature, civilization, spring up in the track of this work, as they followed the labors of the missionary bishops and monks who won the nations of Europe to the Christian faith.

Missionaries do not aim to Americanize or Europeanize the peoples of the Orient, or to bring them under the political control of the great powers of the West, or to impose our type of civilization upon them. Neither do they interfere with the politics of the country where they labor. They do their work in loyalty to the existing government, as did Christ and the apostles. Turkey sorely needs to be reformed; China suffers everywhere for want of honest government; the political changes desirable in Africa are countless in number and variety. But Christian missionaries do not attempt these reforms. They have a deeper aim and address a more vital need; they seek to Christianize these peoples, to penetrate their hearts and lives with the truth and spirit of the gospel, to enthrone Jesus Christ in their souls, and to make righteousness and truth a plastic power in all forms of their life. This is the greatest blessing that can come to any nation and to any man. There is no human soul, and there is no people, to whom Christ does not bring an infinite blessing; there is no faith which Christianity is not worthy to replace, which it is not destined to replace. It is not to share the world *with* Islam, or *with* Buddhism, or *with* any other religious system. It is the one true religion for man as man, in the Orient and in the Occident, in the first century and in the twentieth century and as long as time shall last. We hear no other voice in all the tide of time saying: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." But for eighteen centuries countless souls of every name and clime have brought their burdens and their sins to Jesus Christ, and have found rest to their souls. And to-day the weary and hopeless in India and China, in Japan and Africa, are coming to His feet and finding rest and peace.

The men and women who direct this work abroad deserve the love and confidence which in so generous measure are bestowed upon them. They are human, with obvious limitations, and

subject to mistakes, as those have been who have been engaged in every great enterprise since the world began. The gospel has never been preached by perfect men ; not when it supplanted the elegant mythology and ancient paganism of Rome ; not when it smote the gods of the North, of Egypt, and of the East.

But when this is said, all that is needful in the way of concession has been said. Compared with other Christian teachers and leaders of their times, foreign missionaries as a class are in no respect deficient or in need of apology. For strength and clearness of mind, for balanced judgment, for practical sense, for industry and efficiency, for power in leadership and organization, for success in dealing with men, for magnanimity and courage, for patience and heroic self denial, they are the peers of the best men of their generation. Carey, with whom our modern movement began, was one of the most remarkable linguists of any age, and has put the learning of this century under lasting obligations. Judson, the Apostle to Burmah, was one of the foremost men of his times in all respects ; and his achievements are a standing witness to his power. Livingstone, whose contributions to geography and science and the discovery of a continent are in the mouth of every one, did all his great service as a missionary. And what shall I say more of Morrison and Bridgman, of Dwight and Riggs, of Williams and Parker, of Jessup and Van Dyke, of Patteson and Bingham, of Hannington and Pinkerton, and the hosts of men and women, who, in many lands, in many tongues, and through the generations, have witnessed the gospel, subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, and entered into rest ? The men and women whom we send come out of our purest homes ; many of them are trained in our best colleges and universities ; they are not mere devotees or enthusiasts, but practical, sensible, capable of the best service that is rendered at home and abroad. Mission Boards do not send any one and every one who desires to go ; careful inquiry is made in regard to every applicant, and those only are approved who promise efficient service, probably not more than a fourth of the whole number that apply. And this care is indispensable. No weakling can deal effectively with this work of persuading the will and moving the heart and transforming the life of a people. He is useless everywhere, as much so in the heart of Africa or in the islands of the Pacific, as in Turkey, or India, or China, as much

so in all these regions as in the cultured circles of America or England.

The men and women who represent the principal missionary boards in foreign fields to-day are the peers of the men and women in Christian lands from among whom they were selected; for character and power they deserve and command the respect of all who know them and their work. They are fit to stand by the side of those men whose deeds and achievements in sub-Apostolic days, and in the great missionary epochs of the Middle Ages have made their names immortal. Carey and Judson, Morrison and Livingstone, take rank with Irenæus and St. Patrick, with Augustine and Boniface. And those now on the field are doing the deeds and wielding the power of the fathers and pioneers. Their great life work is not a mistake; their labors are not in vain. Their contributions to the knowledge of their times, in geography, ethnology, philology, comparative religions, which have commanded wide admiration and have laid the learned world under a lasting obligation, a brief abstract of which fills a volume, although they are incidental and secondary to their main work, yet indicate the industry, the breadth of mind and scholarly attainments of these men, and entitle them to the highest respect. But their greatest deeds lie in another sphere. They are the leaders and inspiring life of a movement that outrivals the march of Roman conquests, the mighty growth of English power, and is slowly changing the face of the nations and the course of human history. And they are worthy of the sublime place and work to which they have been called.

Missionary methods vary according to the land and people where this work is prosecuted, and according to the stage of advancement in the work. In a sense everything was new and tentative at the opening of the century; but with the expansion of the field and the accumulation of experience, there has gradually been formed a general system of missionary operations in which all societies in America and Europe are substantially agreed. The first duty of the missionary, on arrival in the field, is to acquaint himself with the people, their language, their customs, their inherited faith, and their institutions. With this goes a careful study of the missionary work in progress, the stage which it has reached, the end it is to win. The leading duty of the mission-

ary, after having established personal relations with the people and won their confidence, is to instruct them in the knowledge and faith of Jesus Christ. This is pre-eminently a work of teaching and persuasion, whether done in the public congregation, or in the home, or in personal conversation. No sane missionary ever thinks of imposing a creed, or of forcibly overpowering the will of the individual or the community; and any instance of such methods would be condemned by the voice and practice of the whole body of missionaries in the foreign field. That is done which Paul and the other Apostles did when they preached in Jerusalem and Antioch, in Asia and in Macedonia; the gospel is held up and explained in its distinctive and glorious facts, till the mind is illumined, till the heart is moved, and the will is swayed to penitence and faith and love.

As soon as a company of believers is gathered, the Christian church is formed, and the new society is led forward as rapidly as possible in Christian knowledge and character, in self-direction and self-support, and in active co-operation with the missionary force in spreading the message and building the church. In order to aid and reinforce this evangelistic effort and also to train those natives who are to be leaders of their people in church and school and in all Christian activities, schools are opened under the personal instruction of the missionaries and picked youths gathered in them for the most careful training. The mission schools of all grades, from the kindergarten to the college and theological seminary, which flourish to-day in India and China, in Africa and Japan, as well as in Turkey, and in which nearly 700,000 pupils are gathered, are among the most striking and hopeful parts of the whole missionary enterprise. Graduates of these schools are already in the pastorate in every mission field, and are associated with the missionaries as teachers in the higher schools and in important literary work. They include men of noble gifts and attainments, and form the nucleus of that body of native Christians upon whom in due time the entire Christian work in their several lands will devolve. The literary work of the missionaries is no less striking. Text books for the schools, newspapers for the churches, lesson helps for Sunday schools, the beginnings of a Christian literature, are included in this department of missionary labor. But its greatest service lies in giving the Scriptures to the nations. The Bible has been

translated fully or in part into at least 270 different languages or dialects by the missionaries of this century, and is circulated by millions of copies in Turkey, India, Burmah, China, Japan and Africa, so that the vast majority of earth's inhabitants can read in their own tongue the wonderful works of God. This is a majestic achievement, contributing more toward the enlightenment and civilization of the world than any other single human agency that can be named. What the Bible has done and is still doing for England and all English-speaking peoples, it is beginning to do for the hundreds of millions in the Oriental world. Commerce can point to no achievement that compares with this. Legislation and diplomacy never attempted and never dreamed of conferring such benefits on mankind.

In a word the method of missionary labor in our day proceeds in a simple, direct course through personal instruction and influence to the establishment of Christian churches and their associated agencies, under native leadership, in sufficient numbers and strength in due time to effect the Christianization of the life and thought and institutions of every land.

The success of foreign missions in our times abundantly attests the reasonableness of their aim, the efficiency of the missionary force, and the wisdom of their methods.

We must bear in mind that the era of modern missions scarcely spans a single century, and that a large part of the time and force devoted to them has necessarily been given to exploration, to the mastery of languages and other pioneer work, and to the gathering of the mission plant. This work, though it will ordinarily need to be done but once, is absolutely necessary at first, and constitutes a fundamental part of the whole enterprise. Much of it cannot be put into statistics, and it does not seem to signify when we are counting up results. The Christian conquest of the Roman Empire required nearly three centuries; the Christianization of Europe, after the Roman Empire of the West broke up, went on for more than five centuries. The problem of modern missions is far vaster than both those problems combined; and the success of the efforts thus far made can be justly measured only by bearing all these facts in mind. An impressive proof of the success already gained is found in the fact that within a single century from Carey's day missions have been planted in every great nation and island in all the uneven-

gelized world, and that true converts have been won in every place where the work is begun. There are native Christians in many provinces of China to-day as true and faithful, as self-denying and devoted, as the men and women of Philippi, whom Paul addresses as "my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and my crown." African Christians at Uganda have sealed their faith with their blood; Hindus, Burmese, Japanese, South Sea Islanders, Moslems, Buddhists, Confucianists, Idolaters—there is scarcely a land or people where the message of the missionary has not taken effect. It has already been demonstrated that the gospel *finds* these peoples as certainly as it found the Greeks and Romans, the English and the Saxons. And this fact is prophetic of the final and universal success of this movement. If 50,000 true converts to Christ have already been won in China, the whole multitude of China's millions *can* be won. The lever that has lifted 1,000,000 souls out of the darkness of paganism into Christian life and civilization is strong enough to lift the whole world into the light of God. We may justly change our Saviour's words of prophecy to the sober terms of history, and say: "They *are coming* from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, and are sitting down in the kingdom of God."

The statistics of missions, though they can never express more than a part of the results that have been gained, still give ample evidence of an expanding and successful work. The number of Christian communicants in all heathen lands to-day exceeds one million souls, counting only the results of Protestant missions. This implies about four million adherents, men, women, and children already separated from the prevailing religious customs and habitually attending Christian worship and receiving Christian instruction. At the present rate of increase this number is doubling in less than ten years. It will require the continuation of the present course of things for only a few decades before the Christian communities will outnumber all others in these lands. But that is not all. No other faith is gaining in numbers like this; Buddhism, Confucianism, Mohammedanism are barely holding their own. The course of history and Providence favors this missionary enterprise, and makes against all other faiths with which it comes into contact; and the balance of power in many an unevangelized land is slowly shifting to the side of the gospel and its messengers.

Certain conspicuous examples of missionary success give clearness and point to this forecast. Seventy-five years since, the Sandwich Islands were the abode of pagans and barbarians, without a written language, places of dread or scorn to all the civilized world. To-day these islands have their recognized place among the Christian powers of the times, and are the abode of thrift and prosperity, with schools and churches, and the industries of a civilized land. And the transformation, little short of a miracle, is due to the labors and influence of the American missionaries, who, at the peril of their lives, went thither in 1819 and wrought with God for the regeneration of the kingdom. Defects are easily found in the present state of the islands, as they are in great Christian centers like London and New York; but the Christianization of those islands by missionary effort is as real and glorious a fact as the Christianization of Rome or England in the ancient days.

Fifty years ago the Fiji Islands were full of cannibals and pagans, places of war and dread. To-day cannibalism and paganism are gone, and the Christian churches are thronged with devout worshippers. It was not commerce or colonization or natural development that wrought the change; it was the Christian missionary and the power of his message and life.

Madagascar is a glorious witness to the power of Christian missions, and to the vital power of the Christian faith. The Christian victory in Burmah, the swift growth of the Christian host among the Telugus in India and among the Japanese—these all speak one word, and smite to silence every tongue that attributes failure to missions or that would deem their support a needless and a fruitless waste. It is most significant to note that 280 missionary societies, substantially representing Protestant Christendom, more than two-thirds of which have been formed within the last three decades, are now at work in the foreign field. More than 3,000 of the most promising young men and women in the colleges and seminaries of America alone are to-day personally pledged to this work. The educated youth of a land are not wont to espouse a weak or failing cause. More than \$5,000,000 are yearly devoted to this cause by American Christians alone, and the amount increases year by year. Intelligent and clear-headed men and women, like these, including among them some of the ablest business men of the day, are not wont to waste their resources

on an idle and fruitless scheme. This sum is a trifle, indeed, compared with what is annually wasted in tobacco, or in intoxicants, or carelessly spent on the merest luxuries; and yet it is enough to prove that the good sense and sober reason of the leading Christian denominations of the country are convinced of the wisdom and success of the enterprise.

It would be interesting, also, if there were time, to mention the striking events which during this century have conspired to aid and quicken this work of foreign missions; to note how the pagan world has been opened, hermit nations drawn out of their seclusion, the Dark Continent unveiled; to observe how the English speaking people, to whom the principal part of this missionary work has been committed, are steadily gaining the supreme influence in the world, how the English language is coming to be the means of common intercourse around the globe, making accessible the wealth of its literature and history and institutions; to point out how foreign missions have served to develop and give practical power to the conception of the solidarity of the race, the universal validity of international law, the authority of the public opinion of Christendom. Though these are secondary and subordinate results, they are of the greatest consequence, and they compel the conclusion that Christianity is the religion of the ages and of mankind, as valid and as full of blessing to the Orient as to the Occident, to the modern as to the ancient world, so related to human nature itself that the attempt to spread it to every land and every age is the part of wisdom as it is the dictate of Christian love and loyalty.

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